



Letter to the Editor



Dear Sir/Madam

We wish to take the opportunity to inform colleagues about some new developments in the professionalisation of forensic anthropology in the UK and do so through this letter. The Royal Anthropological Institute represents and promotes all aspects of the discipline of anthropology and was very willing to undertake the role of and responsibility of professional body for forensic anthropology in the UK. Through a process of robust and transparent public and professional consultation and refinement, a structured framework for certification of competence to practise in the UK has been agreed and implemented. In the past few months, the initial suite of certification examinations has been held and the first UK certified forensic anthropology professionals have been approved. It is expected that in the future forensic anthropologists working in the UK Criminal Justice System will be challenged with regards to their professional certification status by the police, lawyers for the prosecution and defence as well as the courts.

There are three levels of certification relating to professional experience and expertise and this robust framework permits investigating authorities, lawyers, the judiciary and other relevant professional bodies to gauge the level of practitioner expertise that is required for their purposes and identify the most suitable practitioner to engage. The highest level of certification (FA-I) confirms that the holder is a highly experienced forensic anthropologist who has demonstrated independent credibility both within their profession and in respect of expert witness duties in the UK courts. The second level (FA-II) represents a forensic anthropologist who is competent to practice but may have limited or no experience of high profile/complex casework or court room skills. An FA-III forensic anthropologist is competent in basic skills but may not have had experience of active casework responsibility. The career structure embedded within this framework is one of collegiate mentoring and support, designed to raise the standards of this scientific discipline for the UK courts and facilitate competent succession training. The first FA-I and FA-III examinations have been completed and the first set of FA-II examinations will occur in

July 2014. By the summer of 2014 it is anticipated that, for the first time, the UK will have a fully operational professional certification structure of forensic anthropology expert practitioners, all of whom will be listed on the RAI website.

To set a professional certification structure for a forensic discipline has been both a challenge and an honour for the Royal Anthropological Institute and this has been achieved in partnership with the British Association for Forensic Anthropology and with the full knowledge of the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator. It is in the interests of justice that investigative authorities and the criminal justice system are made aware of this development so that they can take full advantage of this quality assurance process by engaging with anthropologists who have been independently certified to an appropriate level of expertise. It is also essential that Higher Education Institutions, who offer forensic modules and degrees in Forensic Anthropology are aware of the RAI forensic anthropology curriculum that has been both designed and approved by the practitioners in this discipline to ensure that trainee practitioners in this field are appropriately equipped for their future professional roles and responsibilities.

Sincerely,

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and Ireland, United Kingdom

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